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## THE MEANING OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

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The Mexican Revolution is a revolution. I use these words, which are not my own, to emphasize the true character of our struggle; and as I know that in the United States as well as in foreign lands, public opinion is at sea regarding us, due to the efforts of those who strive to resurrect obsolete systems, I have thought it my duty, as a Mexican who loves his native land, to try to explain, however deficiently, the real motives of this vast social movement. This excuses my efforts, such as they are, before so distinguished a gathering, in a language practically unknown to me.

The founts of alleged information are responsible for the derogatory conception of Mexico in the minds of most Americans. Writers of overheated imagination depict Mexico as a land of mental as well as physical quakes, where everything is perpetually boiling,—the climate, the politics, and the passions. Men of business look upon Mexico as an alluring field for capital, for investment (or rather for exploitation), in the most onerous sense of the word. The reader in general, reflecting on the morning pabulum of his favorite newspaper, believes that the revolution is but a kaleidoscopic succession of battles and skirmishes, with the leaders now on top, and now underneath, something like dogs and cats in a barrel. Even the fair-minded cannot know what is going on south of the River Grande, as they cannot know the truth.

In all social upheavals which have to be decided on the field of battle, the far-away observer is apt to lose sight of the motives and purposes, the psychological energy. He only rivets his attention upon the warrior's bloody business, which is but the exteriorization of thought's evolution. In all its history, from the struggle for independence, Mexico has struck some notes, has cleared some paths, which have awakened the interest of the United States.

The struggle to throw off the Spanish yoke, though it did not awake any special interest in the United States, did at least elicit

its sympathy. In truth the subjects of mutual interest between the budding North American democracy, and the secular Spanish colony were few. Investments of American capital, and American settlers were barely noticeable. It was after the fall of Maximilian's empire, and the triumph of the liberals in Mexico that relations really began. In that critical period of our history, when Napoleon III decided to impose by force an imperial throne upon free America, the spirit of justice and foresight of the American people awoke to the danger, and the United States helped us in a positive manner to regain our freedom and develop our individuality. Slowly, capital and technical skill came to work among us, and we received them with open arms.

Mexico is a great field for endeavor and capital, and fortunes have been made overnight. Therein lay the red flag of danger. Enormous regions on the north were surrendered for a song to would-be colonists who were to transform them into rose gardens, yet the wilderness still exists and the rose gardens are not in evidence. The Mexican government's concessions were utilized to exploit, not the land but the concession. This benefited many but not the country itself which lost untold millions of acres solely for the advantage of speculators, who had no intention of making needed improvements or of creating anything except trouble.

If it was the case of an "infant industry," it was smothered with privileges and franchises to such an extent that if a competitor tried later to enter the field, it found its efforts of no use in view of the first one's monopoly. It was simply that the first got all, and the others found the field closed. It would be out of place to cite examples in these cursory remarks, but there were many companies with no competition to face who dreamed only of their privileges. They did nothing, and prevented others from doing anything. I must say that free competition appeals much more to me. In struggles of all kinds, biological, social, and economic, the triumph goes to the fittest. I cannot believe that individuals, or industries, really require the state's crutch in order to progress.

The Mexican revolution understands the need of developing the country; that progress depends on work. It wishes to unshackle opportunity, and open the doors to those who wish to work and to get an adequate return for their efforts. Instead of accumulating all of the wealth in the grip of a handful who adopted a dog-in-the-

manger policy towards development, the revolution wishes to help the average man and to destroy the treadmill of hateful privilege.

Finally, the revolution has been called inimical to foreigners, and it is alleged that it denies them their rights. This is a phenomenon like those Spencer called "errors of social perspective." For a long time written law existed in Mexico merely as a matter of form and only in books. Its guarantees and its sanctions were never applied for the benefit of the common people. Only foreigners, and especially those of such high position that they could bring their influence to bear upon their diplomatic representatives, could secure the application of the law through diplomatic channels, provided such law was favorable to them. A rigorous law was always applied against the Mexican.

From all this there resulted the fact that thus the foreigner was aided and the Mexican was at a serious disadvantage in the enjoyment of rights and in the protection of the laws. It is now the purpose of the revolution that all may equally enjoy such benefits. The revolution withdraws nothing from the foreigners that they had before, but it grants to Mexicans what was denied to them. Hence the astonishment that for the first time in the history of Mexico the equality of all before the law is sought.

I wish to make this point clear. Our purpose is not to lower the status of the foreigners. We desire that they come and work among us, and contribute to the nation's development through their capital and labor and skill. But we also wish that the Mexican too may know that in his own country he will receive similar justice.

If my labored words have not been well understood, they may yet cast some light upon the points which I wish to make clear. If I have secured this result I shall consider myself happy. I beg this distinguished gathering to excuse my many deficiencies in the use of a language that is not my own.